

White Rice Isn’t the Enemy, Coffee Isn’t Always A Friend: Harvard Doctor Busts Food Myths

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Nishad Thaivalappil
Harvard-trained doctor busts common food myths, showing how everyday choices can heal or harm your gut.

Many people cut out rice from their meals when trying to lose weight, believing it will add extra kilos. At the same time, some rely heavily on coffee, thinking it is always good for health. But these common assumptions might not be completely true. What you eat every day can either help or harm you, depending on how you consume it.

Dr. Saurabh Sethi, a gastroenterologist trained at Stanford and Harvard, shared a list of surprising yet science-backed facts about common foods. His insights highlight how small changes in the way we eat can make a big difference to gut health and overall well-being.

Bananas are best when eaten slightly green

According to Dr. Sethi, bananas are much healthier when they are slightly green rather than overripe. “They are rich in resistant starch, a prebiotic that feeds your good gut bacteria without spiking your blood sugar,” he explains. In contrast,



when bananas turn brown and soft, most of their starch converts into sugar.

Coffee can help your gut but may also cause problems

For many, coffee is the first thing they reach for in the morning. It not only wakes you up but also helps with gut motility and supports good microbes.

However, Dr. Sethi warns against overconsumption. Drinking too much coffee or having it on an empty stomach can sometimes cause acidity, reflux, anxiety, or loose stools.

Spices are more than just flavour often think of spices only as taste enhancers, but they can actually act like natural medicine. Turmeric, ginger, and fennel, for example,

have anti-inflammatory properties and can protect the gut lining. “I take all three daily,” Dr. Sethi shares, underlining their powerful role in maintaining gut health.

Plain yogurt is healthier than probiotic drinks

Supermarkets today are filled with probiotic drinks that promise better gut health. But according to Dr. Sethi, plain yogurt and other naturally fermented foods are far superior.

“Real fermented foods like plain yogurt, kefir, or sauerkraut offer diverse strains, without the added sugar that feeds bad bacteria,” he explains.

White rice is not always harmful Rice has gained a bad reputation in recent years, especially among

those on weight loss journeys. But Dr. Sethi points out that white rice, when cooled after cooking, develops resistant starch. This acts like fibre and supports gut health. “Cooled rice forms resistant starch, which acts like fibre and supports your microbiome. It’s why leftover rice is often easier to digest,” he says.

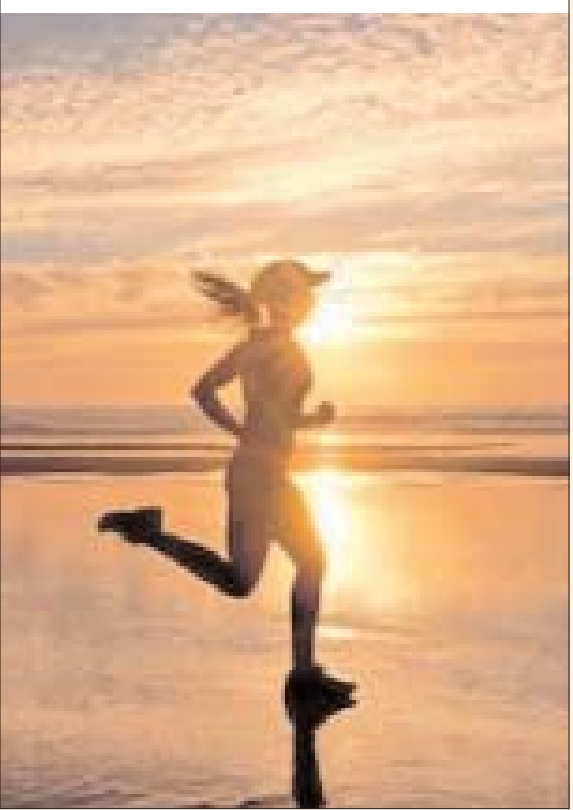
Berries are excellent for your gut If you are looking for foods that protect your gut and reduce stress on the body, berries are the way to go. Blueberries, raspberries, and pomegranates can fight oxidative stress and nourish healthy gut bacteria, often doing a better job than probiotic supplements.

Fibre plays a crucial role in digestion, and chia seeds or basil seeds are great sources. “They absorb water, form a gel in your gut, and support smooth digestion. Great for regularity and feeding beneficial microbes,” says Dr. Sethi. Adding a spoonful of these seeds to your diet daily can make digestion easier.

Beyond these food facts, Dr. Sethi also reminds people that lifestyle habits affect digestion just as much as food choices.

Eating in a hurry, being stressed, or not following a routine can lead to bloating and disturb the balance of gut bacteria. He emphasises that the gut thrives on consistency, regular meals, good sleep, and a stable routine are just as important as what is on your plate.

5 Supplements Women Should Take After Crossing 40



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Women encounter a number of hormonal as well as physical challenges as they start ageing. After crossing 40, it becomes essential to incorporate healthy lifestyle tweaks into your routine to retain your bone density, heart wellness, sustained energy and emotional stability. Given their busy lives and responsibilities, women often ignore their own health and diet. This is where supplements step in, helping them bridge the nutritional gaps and ensuring they maintain their desired health conditions while minimising disease probabilities. Here are five supplements that women above the age of 40 should intake.

A healthy dose of calcium is important for women to retain their bone density even when they start ageing. Reduction of estrogen during perimenopause and menopause leads to bone density decline, which paves the path for osteoporosis and bone weakness. For women above 40, it is recommended to take calcium supplements that help fulfil a daily calcium intake of at least 1,000 mg.

To maintain bone strength and health of the immune system, women also require sufficient intake of Vitamin D in their bodies. As they approach ageing, women’s skin shows decreased ability to produce vitamin D from sunlight exposure. A Vitamin D supplement could help produce the essential nutrient. According to medical standards, women in the age bracket of 40 and 60 must take between 600 and 800 IU of vitamin D daily.

Magnesium For ageing women, magnesium is another essential nutrient that helps convert food into enhanced energy for sustained multitasking. After 40, a magnesium supplement would also help women control blood pressure, experience muscle relaxation and preserve the stability of their heart rhythm. Magnesium deficiency amongst women is observed to cause spasms, migraines and excessive fatigue.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids Omega-3 Fatty Acids protect heart health, brain functioning and joint wellness among women aged 40 and above. As females in this age bracket are more prone to heart diseases, omega-3 fatty acids work against inflammation and stand firm to prevent the harmful effects of high cholesterol levels. These acids exist in fish oil and also support brain operation by enhancing memory and concentration powers during hormonal shifts.

Malaika Arora’s Simple Morning Detox For Glowing Skin And Gut Health

Swati Chaturvedi
Malaika Arora is celebrated not only for her toned physique but also for her radiant, youthful skin. While many assume her glow comes from elaborate skincare routines or cosmetic treatments, Malaika credits a simple morning detox drink for her healthy complexion. Made with just three kitchen staples – cumin (jeera), carom seeds (ajwain), and fennel (saunf), this easy-to-prepare drink supports digestion, detoxification, and overall wellness.

Gut health plays a crucial role in achieving glowing skin. Dr Komal Malik, Head Dietitian at Asian Hospital, Faridabad, explains, “There is a strong link between good digestion and bright skin. Many skin issues can be avoided entirely if the stomach and intestines are functioning well. Surprisingly, the solution to most digestive problems can often be found in the kitchen rather than in expensive supplements.”

Why Cumin, Ajwain, and Fen-



nel Work So Well
Cumin (Jeera): Contains thymol, which promotes saliva production, aiding digestion from the very first bite. It relieves bloating, nausea, and indigestion while

stimulating bile secretion, essential for breaking down fats.
Carom Seeds (Ajwain): Known for stimulating digestive fire, ajwain helps relieve gas, acid reflux, and feelings of heaviness in

cramps, IBS, and sluggish digestion. According to Ayurveda, fennel helps balance all three doshas – vata, pitta, and kapha.

How to Make Malaika’s Morning Detox Drink

Ingredients:
1 tsp cumin seeds (jeera)
1 tsp carom seeds (ajwain)
1 tsp fennel seeds (saunf)

A few drops of lemon juice (optional)

Method:
Lightly roast cumin, fennel, and carom seeds at night.

Steep them in a glass of water overnight.

Boil the mixture for a few minutes in the morning.

Strain, sip warm, and add a few drops of lemon juice if desired.

Malaika’s simple morning ritual proves that radiant skin and overall wellness don’t always require costly products. With a handful of everyday ingredients and consistent practice, you can strengthen your gut, detoxify naturally, and achieve a healthy glow. Sometimes, the most effective health solutions are right in your kitchen.

5 Common Monsoon Illnesses That Aren’t Viral Fever

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Swati Chaturvedi
When the rains arrive, “viral fever” becomes a catch-all phrase. But a large share of monsoon sickness isn’t viral at all, it’s driven by bacteria, protozoa, rickettsia, and even fungi that thrive in humidity, water-logging, and mosquito breeding. Cities from Mumbai to smaller districts report seasonal spikes every year, which clinicians tie to flooding, stagnant water, and packed OPDs. Recent city data again shows malaria climbing with the early rains, while doctors warn of water-exposure illnesses after heavy downpours, a context that helps explain what people are actually facing this season.

Dr Suchismitha Rajamanya, Lead Consultant & HOD, Internal Medicine, Aster Whitefield Hospital, shares her insights. Malaria is a protozoan infection transmitted by Anopheles mosquitoes that breed in rain-filled puddles and muddy locations (including construction potholes). Unlike viral fevers, malaria typically presents with cyclical chills and fever. It can progress to severe disease, but when diagnosed and treated with antimalarials, it is fully curable. Multiple studies in India describe the monsoon-season peak, since rain-filled puddles and elevated humidity allow mosquitoes to survive longer and transmit more widely. The World Health Organization continues to recognize malaria as a major public-health threat, with seasonal spikes expected wherever mosquito vectors persist. Leptospirosis is another common monsoon illness, a bacterial infection that peaks during floods. The Leptospira bacteria live in the urine of animals, which can wash into puddles or drains. Exposure occurs when contaminated water enters through cuts, abrasions, or soft tissue while wading through floodwater. Early symptoms, fever, headache, and myalgia may mimic flu; however, severe infections can cause jaundice, kidney injury, meningitis, or pulmonary hemorrhage. Clinical vigilance is critical in the weeks following floods. Public health advisories

in coastal regions, such as Mumbai, routinely warn of leptospirosis after seasonal water-logging. Typhoid fever, caused by Salmonella Typhi, also surges during the monsoon. Floodwaters often overwhelm sewage and drinking-water systems, raising the risk of fecal contamination. In many Indian cities, intermingled sewage and drinking-water pipelines heighten this threat during flooding events. Clinically, typhoid is marked by high fever and abdominal pain, often with constipation or diarrhea. If left untreated, it can lead to serious intestinal complications. Prevention depends on access to safe water, good food hygiene, and, where available, vaccination. Public health studies in India consistently link post-monsoon typhoid outbreaks to flooding combined with poor water treatment. Cholera, caused by Vibrio cholerae, is another classic waterborne bacterial illness—not a viral fever. It’s an acute diarrheal disease that can cause life-threatening dehydration within hours. Heavy rains and broken sanitation lines create ideal conditions for outbreaks. Studies in India highlight rainfall as a major driver of contamination, while the WHO stresses the disease’s short incubation period and the urgent need for rehydration and clean-water access. Beyond being a health crisis, cholera is also a story of inequity, since it disproportionately affects communities with poor infrastructure conditions often worsened by monsoons.

Fungal skin infections including ringworm (tinea corporis), jock itch (tinea cruris), and candidal intertrigo also spike in humid monsoon weather. These aren’t minor nuisances; dermatology OPDs report visible surges, fueled by damp clothing, friction, and crowded living conditions. Patients typically present with itchy, expanding rashes with red, scaly borders, or painful maceration in skin folds. Indian dermatology studies confirm higher incidence in warm, humid seasons. Treatment involves keeping the skin dry, avoiding shared towels and clothing, and using topical or oral antifungals not antibiotics. The takeaway this season is clear: not every monsoon fever is “viral.” Correct diagnosis matters, since treatments vary widely. Malaria requires antimalarials; typhoid or cholera need targeted antibiotics; tinea infections require antifungals; leptospirosis calls for specific antibiotics and exposure management. Preventive measures – safe water, hygienic food practices, dry clothing, mosquito control, protective footwear in floodwaters, and timely medical assessment can mean the difference between a short illness and serious complications. As rainfall events intensify and urban water systems grow strained, non-viral monsoon illnesses deserve as much attention as dengue both in clinical care and in public awareness.